

Professor Sir Stewart Sutherland, former Principal, remembered

The funeral service of former Edinburgh Principal and Vice-Chancellor Lord Sutherland of Houndwood is to take place at St Giles Cathedral on Monday, 26 February.

One of Britain's most distinguished philosophers of religion, Sir Stewart Sutherland became Principal at Edinburgh in 1994, a position he held until 2002, by which time he had become a life peer.

A former pupil of Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, and a graduate of the University of Aberdeen and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, he wrote widely on issues of faith and philosophy.

Lord Sutherland held teaching posts at Bangor University and at the University of Stirling before being given a chair in the history and philosophy of religion at King's College London in 1977.

In 1981 he became Vice-Principal of King's College London, taking over as Principal in 1985. He also served from 1988 to 1991 as a Governor of Birkbeck College.

In 1990 Lord Sutherland became Vice-Chancellor of the University of London. Two years later he accepted the appointment as the Chief Inspector of Schools and the Head of Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education.

During his period of office he commissioned an inquiry into the declining popularity of science, and was the author of the section of the Dearing report dealing with teacher education and training

Lord Sutherland returned to Scotland to take up the post at Edinburgh in 1994. During his time at Edinburgh, he chaired a Royal Commission on long-term care of the elderly, which issued its report in 1999.

He once described his career as "a portfolio existence — a bit of this, a bit of that", but few academics can have matched the range of his appointments.

His achievements have been recognised all over the world, in doctorates and fellowships, but colleagues and friends spoke of a man who wore his learning lightly.

In 2002 he stepped down from the Edinburgh Vice-Chancellorship. By then, he and his family had moved to the village of Houndwood in the Scottish Borders, from where he took his title.

Lord Sutherland had been the President of the Saltire Society, which aims to increase public awareness of Scotland's cultural heritage, and the President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

He was appointed a Knight of the Order of the Thistle, the highest honour in Scotland, in 2002.

Lord Sutherland is survived by his wife, Sheena, a clinical virologist who became a director of the Scottish Cancer Foundation. The couple met at the University of Aberdeen and had a son and two daughters.

The funeral service, which will take place at 11.30am, will be followed by a private cremation. A memorial service will be held in London later in the year.